

Introduction

by Chuck Kleinhans

In a relatively short time, critical discussion of global Chinese cinema has expanded to the point where new books appear frequently, articles explore previously unexamined subjects, and more new films and previously unavailable classic films emerge in distribution. We're delighted to contribute to this trend with this Special Section.

We begin with three essays on well-known recent films. The first two are about well-known Hong Kong directors. First, Allan Cameron examines travel and cross-cultural themes in Wong Kar-Wai's body of elegant and cosmopolitan art films. Second, looking at a commercial comedy, Stephen Chow's *Kung Fu Hustle*, Kin-Yan Szeto considers how Chow has moved from being a local Hong Kong comedian to broaden out to appeal to a potentially international audience. Third is an essay on a Mainland film with international critical recognition. Jenny Kwok Wah Lau takes a close look at *Hero*, asking how a Chinese film can aim for global commercial success while maintaining an authentic commitment to Chinese social and cultural values. It's also a time for reconsideration of relations between Chinese diaspora cinemas, and Li Zeng's reading of June Yip's book on Taiwan gives us a better perspective on that aspect of Chinese cinema.

Some of the most interesting new work on Chinese cinema develops from historical studies. Looking at the past from a fresh perspective is at the core of three essays by Tan See Kam, Poshek Fu, and Kenny Ng as they consider Huangmei Opera and Cathay cinema.

In terms of contemporary Mainland Chinese cinema, Sheldon Lu's article on dialects in contemporary Chinese film opens a new understanding of the rich expression possible across regions and national borders, especially when different dialects serve specific narrative functions within a film. In addition, Mainland China now has a significant emerging independent film sector, to which critics have begun to pay close attention; their analyses of this phenomenon are found here in Esther Cheung's interviews with Chinese critics

Social analyses also provide a way of understanding some of the unique characteristics of specific directors and films. Turning to Hong Kong, Wendy Gan considers how the particular location and characteristics of the city become expressive parts of the city's cinema production. Looking at Hong Kong iconoclast director Fruit Chan, Wimal Dissanayake discusses his narratives and representations of class, while Chuck Kleinhans gives a case study of *Dumplings*, a Fruit Chan horror film allegorizing contemporary capitalism.

Finally, Ting Wang draws from her dissertation research on the political and economic factors that shaped 1990s film policy in the People's Republic of China to give a revealing, and previously unknown, analysis of the underpinnings of China's rapid movement onto the world stage of film.

These *JUMP CUT* articles add to the richness of recent books on Chinese film. An annotated list of some of these books follows:

Chris Berry, ed. *Chinese Films in Focus: 25 New Takes* (London: British Film Institute, 2003). This collection of model case studies displays a sophisticated richness in analysis and in key ways moves beyond the "usual suspects" or "usual assumptions" that have characterized the review-heavy writing on the subject to date.

With their new study, *China on Screen: Cinema and Nation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), Chris Berry and Mary Farquhar set a new standard in dealing with the complexities of a "national" approach. Indispensable.

Michael Berry has conducted interesting and informative interviews and the results appear in *Speaking in Images: Interviews with Contemporary Chinese Filmmakers* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005). Berry is well informed and well prepared and the interviewees (key figures from China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong) respond in kind.

Gina Marchetti, *From Tian'anmen to Times Square: Transnational China and the Chinese Diaspora on Global Screens, 1989-1997* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006) covers the crucial decade with careful studies supplemented by key interviews. The result is a rich critical analysis of the interaction of globalization and aesthetic production, and evolving diasporic identities.

With *Hong Kong Film, Hollywood and the New Global Cinema: No Film Is an Island* (London: Routledge: 2007), Gina Marchetti and Tan See Kam have created an anthology that solidly frames Hong Kong within both Asian regional and international film markets.

Including consideration of older films along with new genres and cinema institutions such as festivals and genres, the book throws Hong Kong into sharp relief as a significant player in the current scene.

A new anthology by Meagan Morris, Siu Leung Li, and Stephen Chan Ching-kiu, eds. *Hong Kong Connections: Transnational Imagination in Action Cinema* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005) represents a further development out of the usual discussion of the Hong Kong action genre. How Hong Kong film interacts with other national cinemas, its connection with other aspects of local popular culture, and globalization provide a springboard into advanced considerations.

Paul G. Pickowicz and Yingjin Zhang have edited *From Underground to Independent: Alternative Film Culture in Contemporary China* (Lanham MD: Roman and Littlefield, 2006), a vital look at the emerging independent sector. While the future direction of this movement is not predictable, the book assembles essential information and analysis for those who want to consider this next generation.

Zhang Zhen, ed. *The Urban Generation: Chinese Cinema and Society at the Turn of the Twenty-First Century* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007) also marks out new developments with a provocative assortment of articles.

Hong Kong University Press has begun a series of distinctive case study books on individual films. Wendy Gan's *Fruit Chan's Durian Durian* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2005) is a model of careful consideration of a new key film in the canon. Similarly, Wimal Dissanayake's *Wong Kar-Wai's Ashes of Time* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2003) provides an indispensable study and context for this amazing and puzzling (at least to an outsider) film.

Continuing her studies of film from a literary and philosophical approach, Rey Chow in *Sentimental Fabulations: Contemporary Chinese Films* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007) considers the persistence of the "sentimental mode" in a variety of films that tend to play the festival and art house circuit in the West. The appeal of this mode, for Chow, relates to the vast changes now underway and the sentimental offers a conservative haven in a heartless world of drastic upheaval.

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